## May is Preservation Month!

Take a look inside as we talk about demolition threats to Asheville and Montreat, Preservation Grant recipients, the 2021 Griffin award winners for preservation, and an indepth look into the history of Fred Seely and his castle on beautiful Sunset Mountain.

*Happy Preservation Month!*


# Pebbledash

PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF ASHEVILLE AND BUNCOMBE CO.

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF ASHEVILLE AND BUNCOMBE COUNTY Spring 2021


# Saving Charlotte Street

These 2 homes warranted special mention in the Chestnut Hill Nation Register District nomination.

Why does the Preservation Society care so much about the 13 homes slated for demolition in the proposed 101 Charlotte Street development? To hear the developers tell it, they are nothing special, they are just old. And the dilapidated condition of the homes? Could not be helped.

The homes may not look special today, but they are. They are reminders of the days when Charlotte Street was primarily a residential corridor; just as the brick King James Building across the street and repurposed mid-century gas stations are vestiges of the commercial development that followed in the 1920s and 1930s. Each of the houses has been deemed a contributing historic resource in the Chestnut Hill Historic District, a neighborhood whose coherence will be severely compromised by demolition of this extent. Furthermore, they all already exist, and we agree that "the greenest building is the one that is already built."

We, along with others in the community, have pointed out that the long-term owners proposing this development have neglected these houses for many years. Anyone can see that is true. Now, the poor condition of the homes is being used as a reason that the owners should be allowed to demolish them. We cannot stand by quietly without pointing out the irresponsibility of this strategic neglect. If preservation of historic resources meant only saving buildings in good condition, we would be living in a world full of strip malls. These houses can and should be rehabilitated.

We understand that the homes belong to the developers and they have the right to tear them down. But what they are proposing is more than demolition. They are asking for special permission in their redevelopment. The current zoning limits buildings to two stories but they want to replace the homes with something bigger – much bigger! Because they are proposing five-story apartment buildings (as well as an office building, a parking deck, and twenty townhouses), the developers need approval from City Council. It is an approval they do not deserve.

As far as we are concerned, the proposed redevelopment is insult added to the initial injury of demolition. If they were to ask permission to build a dense, multi-use, five-story complex on the vacant lot just south of their proposed site, or the Fuddruckers site across the street, we would be much more amenable to their plans. We would be advocating for increased affordable housing, and for taking design inspiration from the residential and commercial buildings surrounding them, but we would not be fighting the project so fiercely. It is the proposed clear-cutting of a full half of this inhabited, historic block that we consider unconscionable.

People are moving to Asheville and vacationing here in droves because they are drawn to the city known for historic architecture and natural beauty. It is why people come and why we should all be wary of developers offering a "new vision" of Asheville. The existing Charlotte Street corridor is a strong example of how the vestiges of an old Asheville can be repurposed into a bustling business corridor. If we take our cues from these successful adaptive re-uses, Asheville will be able to grow and evolve, while still maintaining connection to its historic roots.

To that end, the Preservation Society has made an offer to purchase the properties. If our offer is accepted, we plan to attach permanent deed restrictions to the buildings and work to find owners who are invested in rehabilitation of the properties for commercial, residential, or mixed-use purposes. Taking on these homes would be a huge strain for a small organization like ours, and yet, we are ready and willing to do everything it takes to see them preserved.

We want the homes saved, we want the neighborhood preserved and we want healthy growth for our city. Living in a place as special as Asheville, we should expect no less.

**How can you help?**

- Visit psabc.org, sign the petition and share the petition link!
- Get a yard sign at 324 Charlotte St. (Weekdays from 9-5)
- Follow us on Facebook and Instagram, and share our posts to get the word out
- Write to City Council and ask them to vote against this project (ashevillenc.gov/government/meet-city-council/)
- Write in a letter to the editor to share your thoughts

# Walton Street Park & Pool

**JOSI WARD**

## PSABC Seeks Protections For City's First Municipal Park Establised For Black Residents

The Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County (PSABC) is joining the calls of many Asheville citizens to preserve the Walton Street Park and Pool. This month we hired a consultant to nominate the site for the National Register of Historic Places and seek to have it listed as a City of Asheville Local Landmark.

Walton Street Park was the first municipal park established for the Black residents of Asheville. It was funded by the Works Progress Administration, following federal recognition that the city's large African American population lacked such an amenity. Originally named Riverview Park, the park at Walton Street opened in 1939 and contained a wading pool, tennis and horseshoe courts, and a small playground. The swimming pool and bathhouse were part of the original plan, but not constructed until 1948. As early as 1953, a coalition of community members called for expansion of the park facilities, which remained the only sanctioned recreational space for the city's Black population. Expansion did not take place.

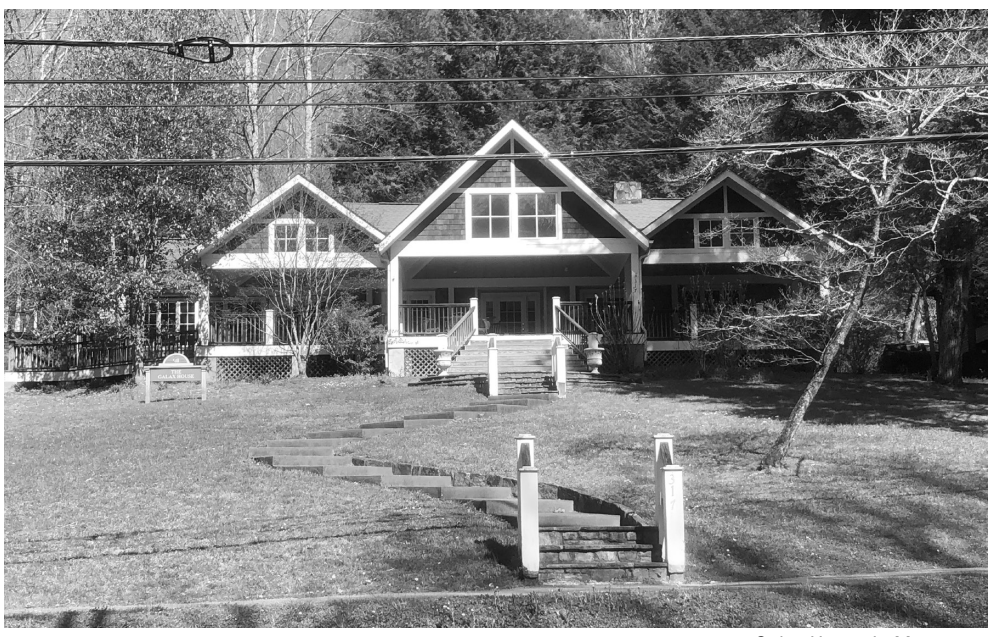
During the 1960s and 1970s the neighborhood abutting the park—referred to as East Riverside then and as Southside today—was the largest urban renewal project in the city. During the decades of clearance, relocation, and redevelopment that followed, conditions at the park deteriorated such that the park was frequently closed to the public, being deemed a risk for children to play in. Even as urban renewal advocates lamented the lack of adequate facilities for East Riverview residents, the park languished.

Recent work by local artists and activists have brought attention to the lasting and painful effects of urban renewal on the African American community of Asheville. Andrea Clark's documentary photographs of Asheville's East End in the 1970s, and the interdisciplinary projects that have been inspired by her work, are helping to revive and call in further memories about the lost landmarks and neighborhoods of the city.

Walton Street Park is not lost . . . yet. In 2015 more than 800 concerned citizens signed a petition drafted by Priscilla Ndiaye to the Asheville City Council calling for Walton Street Park and Pool to be "preserved, renovated, repaired." Renovations to the park and bathhouse have already brought renewed vitality to the park. PSABC is seeking local and federal designation for the Walton Street Park as one important step toward preserving this long-neglected yet much-beloved resource.

Walton Street Pool and bath house as it looks today.

# Montreat Demo Looms



Galax House in Montreat.

The Montreat Conference Center is proposing demolition of three historic structures, used as lodges, to develop the land for a new, larger lodge. The lodges are Galax House, Chestnut Lodge, and the Lord Apartments. The Chestnut Lodge was built by Chester Lord who was the earliest permanent resident of Montreat. It is also believed to be the oldest extant structure in the town. A local group, the Montreat Stewards, has formed to oppose the development and created a petition. We oppose the proposed demolition and support the Montreat Stewards in their efforts to save these homes.

**Learn more at montreat-stewards.org**

# How PSABC Started

The Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County (PSABC) was formed in 1976, with interest in preservation sparked by observance of the U. S. Bicentennial, and in response to threats to local buildings and sites posed by neglect, insensitive alteration, and large-scale transportation projects. Disinvestment in downtown, plans for the open cut through Beaucatcher Mountain, and a proposal to turn Montford Avenue into a through street connecting to U.S.19-23 spurred formation of the volunteer group, which quickly incorporated and initiated work as a community non-profit.

Among the early accomplishments of PSABC was convincing the N. C. Dept. of Cultural Resources to open a Western Office in Asheville, introducing professional preservation services to the region. The Society advocated to city Council and County Commission to establish a joint city-county local landmark and historic district commission, to designate Montford as a local historic district, and to provide matching funds for local survey of historic buildings and sites. These actions made possible the historic designation of numerous sites and districts, and contributed to downtown revitalization and preservation of historic places county-wide.

**Learn more at psabc.org/history**

# From the Executive Director

In 2018 we took a leap of faith and established our Preservation Grant program. We did not know if we would get "good" applications or if we would have success fundraising for the program, but we did know that we wanted to create a community led preservation tool and do a better job of reaching our underserved and rural communities.

In the years since, we have been astounded by the projects this program has allowed us to be a part of. Over five grant rounds in two and a half years, we have awarded $65,000. Everything from emergency plumbing repairs for a church in the East End neighborhood to three National Register nominations to websites, history trails and classroom experiences.

As word of the program reaches further, the number of worthy applications grows. While we hope to grow the program along with the demand, COVID has made fundraising challenging.

Our Time Traveling Gala is the best party of the year, but to us, it is so much more. Every year, we ask our guests to raise their hands to fund our preservation grants and every year they make sure we can fund $20,000 in grants - or more! Sadly, we have decided that for a second year, we must cancel the Gala. We need your help now!

To ensure the grant program can continue uninterrupted, we need your help to raise $30,000. This will fund the second round of 2021 grants and two rounds of grants in 2022.

So imagine yourself in a fabulous house with a glass of champagne in your hand.... and let's raise our hands together to keep this program going! If you need more convincing, you can read about our most recent winners in this issue.

Thank you for supporting preservation in Asheville and Buncombe County.

Sincerely,

Jessie Landl
Executive Director

**Our Mission**
To conserve Asheville and Buncombe County's heritage and sense of place through preservation and promotion of the region's historic resources.

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Jessie Landl

DIRECTOR OF PRESERVATION
Erica LeClaire

OFFICE MANAGER
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# *Spring 2021 Preservation Grants Announced*

### $3,000 to Priscilla Robinson for her continued work to document and tell the stories of Urban Renewal in the Southside neighborhood of Asheville.

"Life, community, and home as many Asheville Black community members once knew it is no longer present. This project will allow one to see through our eyes, walk in our shoes, and hear diverse voices speak our truth in hope of others receiving an understanding of why many are compelled to preserve the history of Asheville's Black community." – *Priscilla Robinson*

**The project will focus on 3 main areas:**
1 Walton Street Park and Pool
2 Urban Renewal, acquisition of Urban Renewal property and reparations
3 Livingston Street School

### $4,000 to Grace Memorial Episcopal Church towards roof replacement and parapet repairs.

Designed by Richard Sharp Smith, the supervising architect for the Biltmore House, Grace Memorial Episcopal Church has been in service since 1905 and stands as an excellent example of Gothic architecture. This grant will help reach a goal of approximately $350,000 in rehabilitation costs.

Of the church, Dale Slusser writes, "My favorite (of Smith's churches) is the charming stone of Grace Episcopal Church on N. Merrimon Avenue. Smith's British heritage shows in his design for Grace Church. With its cross-transept plan and small castellated tower entrance, it would feel just as comfortable sitting in any small rural village in England."

### $5,000 to the St. James AME Church towards roof replacement.

Parishioners are currently unable to worship at the church due to deterioration of the facility, caused in part by water intrusion. This grant will help reach a goal of $48,000 to replace the roof and is part of a large $570,000 fundraising goal to complete a larger rehabilitation effort.

Notably, St. James AME Church is one of a number of important Asheville structures credited to James Vester Miller, a prominent Black contractor in Western North Carolina.

*From the application:*
"During the 1960s and 1970s the East Riverside Community, which includes the East End Valley Street neighborhood, was selected as the site for one the Southeast's largest urban renewal projects. The federal government's urban renewal project, which was led by the East End Valley Street Community Improvement Committee, focused on relocating a significant number of businesses and residents from the area to make way for redevelopment of single family homes and apartments. The East End Valley Street neighborhood had been a traditionally historic African American neighborhood with African American owned businesses.

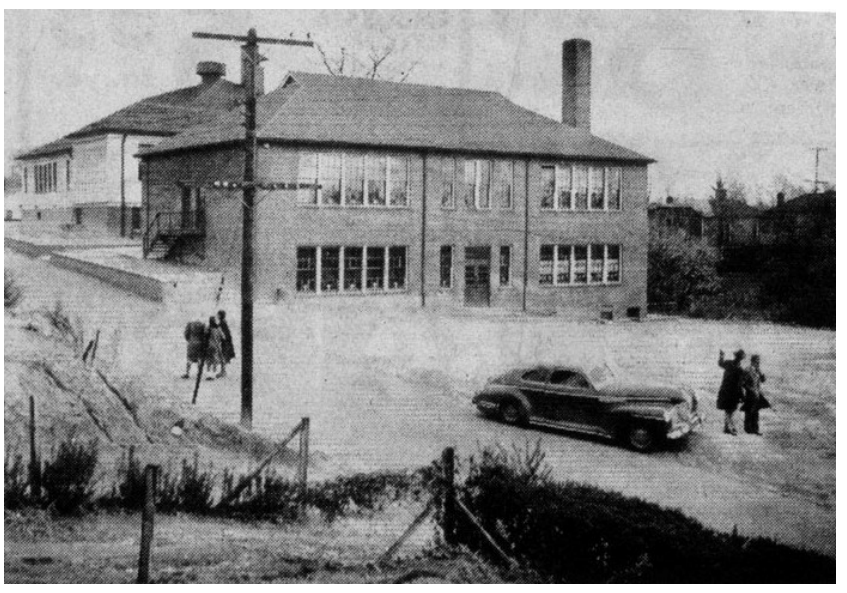
In addition to the neighborhood residents enduring the impacts of urban renewal, the East End Valley Street neighborhood experienced further devastation due to the development of the Interstate expansion of highway 240, which included the creation of a road through Beaucatcher Mountain. The development of the road required the removal of "300 million cubic yards of crushed granite," months of explosive detonations, and thousands of trucks traveling in and around the East End Valley Street neighborhood for years.

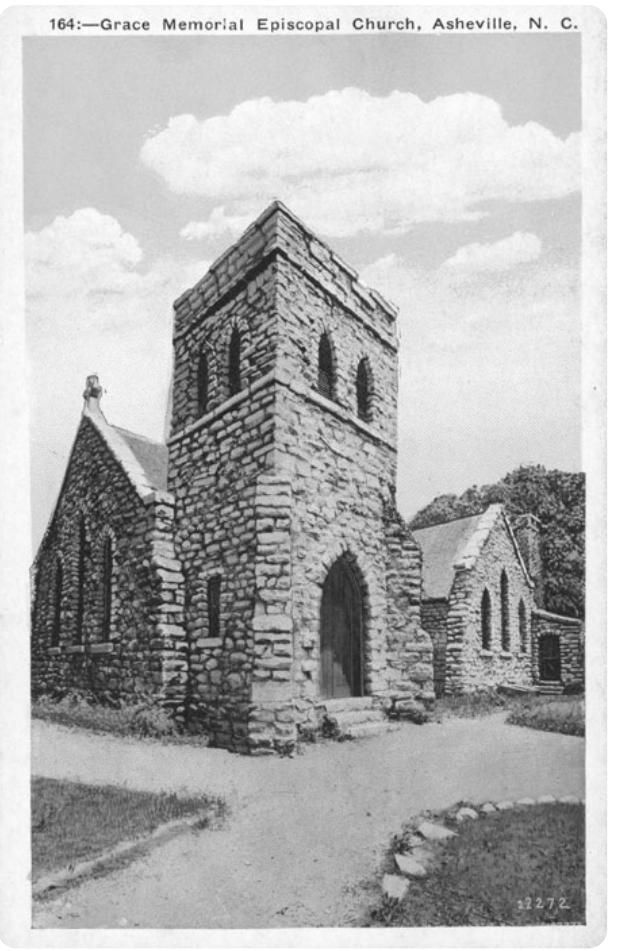
One of the institutions that remained intact during those periods of extreme change and transition was the St. James AME Church. The church became a beacon of hope for the community. The community sought solace at the St. James AME Church. The church hosted community meetings and events."

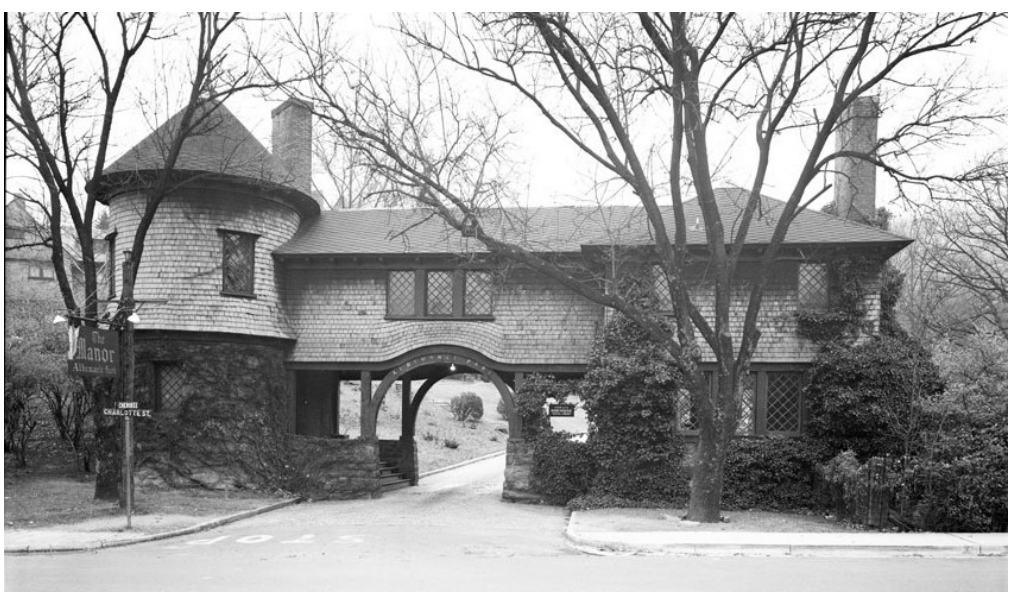
### $550 for owners of the Gatehouse for consulting services.

Built in early 1898 by the Raoul family, the Gatehouse, known then as the Lodge, is the oldest structure in Albemarle Park. In need of numerous repairs, this grant will support efforts to establish this as an historic tax credit rehabilitation project. Utilizing tax credits available through the State Historic Preservation Office can be an important tool in rehabilitation projects.

Interested in supporting the Grant Program or have a preservation project you need financial help in completing? Let us know!





GRANT PROGRAM

**Top Left:** Livingston Street School. Photo courtesy of the Buncombe County Special Collections at Pack Memorial Library.

**Top RIght:** Grace Memorial Episcopal Church.

**Center:** St. James AME Church.

**Left:** The Lodge or Gatehouse in Albemarle Park.

## More Information About Our Preservation Grant Program

We look forward to helping with emergency stabilization projects and restorations of important places, to helping neighborhoods receive designations such as recognition on the National Register of Historic Places and to encouraging and supporting new and unique education and research opportunities. We want to be surprised and humbled by the projects our community asks us to support!

As our city faces the inevitable challenges of growth, PSABC's voice and reach must expand. The important addition of this Preservation Grant Program comes in response to the needs of our community.

In 2021, we will be offering up to $20,000 in grants (individual grants will be from $500 – $5000) to the public in three categories:

**1. Bricks-And-Mortar**
Rehabilitation, restoration and repair of structures that are 50 years of age or older.
*Some examples: Windows and doors, exterior painting, porches, roofs and gutters, electrical and plumbing, hardscaping, foundation, and original exterior or interior details*

**2. Public Education**
Development of educational materials and programs that advance knowledge of our shared history.
*Some examples: Research and documentation, oral histories, installations specific to buildings, place history, and culture, exhibitions, K–12 educational publications, seminars and lectures, and documentary films*

**3. Planning, Survey and Designation**
Planning and design for building rehabilitation and restoration projects, historic resource surveys and local or national designations.
*Some examples: Historic building condition reports, engineering and rehabilitation plans, feasibility studies, historic resource surveys, updates of previous surveys, and local and national historic designations*

**Check out PSABC.org to see past grant recipients and to learn about the upcoming Fall submission deadline.**

## Ask a Preservationist

**Q**. I live in an old house and have recently decided to paint my interior trim, windows and doors. Unfortunately, my window and door hardware has been covered with many layers of paint. I'd like to clean up this hardware and get back to the original finish but using chemical strippers seems like messy, toxic work. Any other ideas?

**A.** The fastest, easiest and best way to clean old paint off all your metal hardware is the crockpot method. It is also the least toxic and most satisfying.

**Here's what you'll need:** -An old crock pot that you will not use for food (I bought mine for $4.50 at the Habitat Restore), a small amount of liquid laundry detergent, rubber gloves, tongs for removing the hot hardware from the crockpot, a plastic razor blade for scraping off the paint (so as not to scratch the hardware), toothpicks for getting paint out of crevices, an old toothbrush and/or non-scratch scouring pad is also handy for final clean up.

**Here's what you do:** Remove the hardware you want to strip and put all the parts into the crockpot. These can be window locks, pulls, door knobs and backplates, strike plates, hinges and don't forget the screws. Anything that is metal can go into your crockpot as long as it can be easily dried afterward. In other words, don't put anything that has mechanical parts inside that you can't get at to dry, like a mortise lock. Cover the hardware with water and add about a tablespoon of liquid laundry detergent. Place on the lid and turn the crockpot to High. Leave your hardware for at least 6 hours or overnight.

Later or in the morning, wearing rubber gloves and using tongs, remove and clean each piece one at a time. Be sure to leave the paint covered hardware pieces in the hot water until you're ready to clean them. Start by using the plastic razor blade to scrape off the large areas of paint. Sometimes the paint will come off in one full piece and it is oh so satisfying when that happens. Other times it will come off in smaller chunks. If it is difficult to remove the paint, you may need to put the piece back into the crockpot for a longer period of time or remove the layers that will come off easily and return the piece to the pot to let the hot water do its magic on the subsequent paint layers. Use a toothpick to get at the hard to reach areas. You can also buy a set of metal picks at Northern Tool or other tool supply store but use a light hand when using them on your hardware so as not to scratch the metal.

Use your toothbrush or non-scratch scouring pad under running water for the final cleaning and Viola!

*Have a question, send to erica@psabcorg*

Yep, it's a crockpot.

# Preservation is about more than old buildings

Preservation is defined by the built environment; places and structures that people have created through manipulating the materials they had access to and creating an impression on the way that spot would look and be used going forward. The built environment makes and is made by us. Historic preservation helps maintain an intangible sense of place that defines an area. As the field of preservation works to address inequities from a focus on affluent, white history which has been exacerbated by racist zoning ordinances, we are utilizing the existing tools and creating new ones to benefit the collective communities we serve. With this mindset, preservation can drive change for good. It can help respond to interconnected issues like social justice, climate change, and building (or rebuilding) a sense of community.

Preservation is about more than preventing an old building from being demolished, historic preservation is about the intangible things that the building represents. Embodied energy, generational wealth and community are not physical things but they can be demonstrated by existing structures. Buildings themselves are significant for the story they tell about their time and place through material and design, among other things. The historical and cultural significance goes beyond the physical structure.

When urban renewal was proposed and beginning to be implemented, in addition to the opposition, there was some support for the development that it would bring in many communities. However, misrepresentations and projects that were not followed through meant that entire swaths of the built environment were demolished without providing adequate replacement of the businesses, homes, and community lost. Some of the oldest Black neighborhoods in Asheville and around the country were torn apart for projects like highways. Black and minority neighborhoods still carry the burden of these losses in terms of homeownership, generational wealth, and community.

Community and sense of place are created around the built environment. Historic preservation principles could be applied to avoid the wholesale destruction of communities as was seen during urban renewal. To retain and rebuild community, preservation principles can document and contextualize, restore and rehabilitate. Through this, the built environment will tell the broader story of American history.

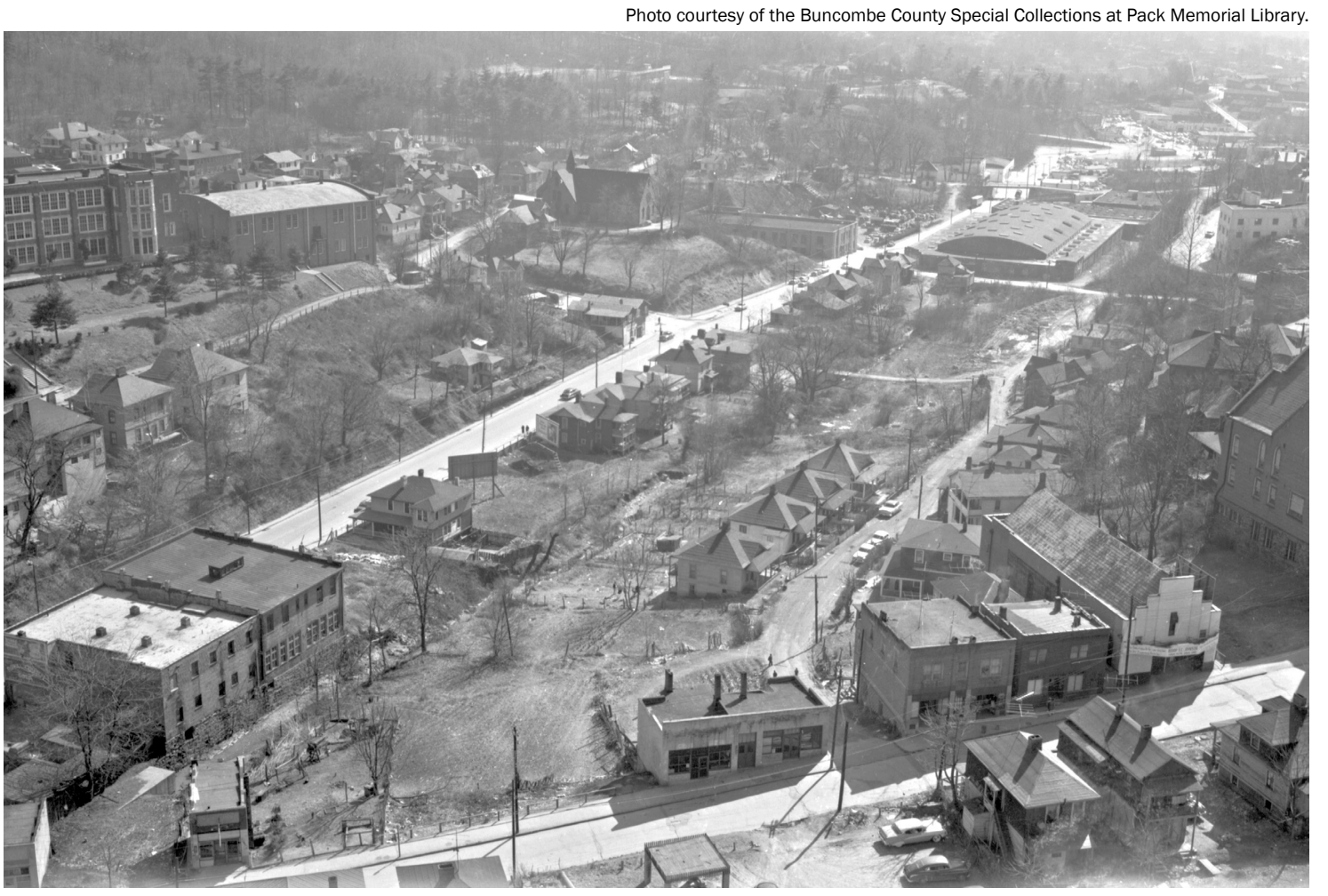
The adage rings with a mostly universal truth; the greenest building is the one that's already built. Said by a former president of the American Institute of Architects, many historic buildings can outperform new and recent construction. The embodied energy contained in existing buildings as well as traditional passive design techniques offset and overtake some of the most energy efficient guidelines that are used today. Preserving these forms and implementing energy saving techniques can play a part in the fight against climate change.

Recently, the Pritzker Prize in Architecture was given to a duo of architects, Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, who have built a career on designing for and adapting existing buildings. They have reimagined social housing spaces focusing on the inhabitants and given industrial buildings a new life. This sort of adaptive reuse isn't new, Lacaton and Vassal have been practicing this way for decades.

Lacaton said "Transformation is the opportunity of doing more and better with what is already existing. The demolishing is a decision of easiness and short term. It is a waste of many things – a waste of energy, a waste of material, and a waste of history. Moreover, it has a very negative social impact. For us, it is an act of violence."

Preservation provides the opportunity to be a part of solutions to some of the most pressing issues of our time.

Photo courtesy of the Buncombe County Special Collections at Pack Memorial Library.



Early 1960's photo of Asheville's Valley Street neighborhood before Urban Renewal. taken from the roof of Asheville City Bulding by Anthony Lord.

## Thank You To Our 2021 Business Members

### *Landmark Business Leaders*

BILTMORE PROPERTY GROUP

CATE SCALES REALTOR/BROKER

NEST REALTY

THE FOUNDRY HOTEL ASHEVILLE

GRAY LINE TROLLEY TOURS OF ASHEVILLE

GRIFFIN ARCHITECTS, P.A.

HdyDsn

NEST REALTY

new morning gallery

### *Friends in Preservation*

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# *2021 Griffin Awards!*

ADAPTIVE REUSE
**Leo's House of Thirst**

REHABILITATION
**242 Montford Ave**

REHABILITATION
**90 Gertrude Place**

REHABILITATION
**85 N. Liberty Street**

ADAPTIVE REUSE
## Leo's House of Thirst

This modest 1949 beauty has been everything from a residence to a dentist's office and is now Leo's House of Thirst. We love a rehabilitation that shows that even simple buildings can be saved and turned into something special!

*Drew Wallace, Owner*
*Drew Wallace and Leila Amiri, Concept and Design*
*Brent Campbell, Architect*
*Joel Osgood, Landscape architect*
*Drom, Construction*

REHABILITATION
## 242 Montford Ave

This 100 year old Montford Home was completely rehabilitated inside and out. Designed by Richard Sharp Smith in the early 1900s for Dr. Tizdale Linn, the work and investment of current owners Kim and Steve Kupras has given this home another 100 years of life.

*Kim and Steve Kupres, Owners*
*Sally House to Home, Designer & General Contractor*
*Mady Engineering*
*Griffin Waste*
*Logan Restoration*
*ReConstruct AVL*
*Zeb Bailey*
*Nail and Grain*
*Super Electro*
*All Ways Plumbing*
*Stickels Service Group*
*Rodriguez Flooring*
*Appalachian Homestead*
*Carolina Window and Door*
*Alpha Stone*
*Four Seasons Paint*
*John McClung Roofing*
*Frye Masonry*
*Inside & Out Handygal*
*USI / Allied*
*Siding Cornice 828*
*Gutterman*
*Britt & Tilson*
*Solar Shield*
*Little River Woodshop*
*MW Studio*
*Smokey Mountain Lumber*
*WNC Tile*
*Christy's Lighting*
*Bella Hardware & Bath*
*Haywood Appliance*
*Henson Builders*

REHABILITATION
## 179 Montford Ave

This 1891 Home was nearly untouched since the 1920s, leaving it in need of TLC and modern upgrades. The extensive and meticulous rehabilitation by homeowners Eric and Rebecca Halvorson retained as many original features as possible, returning the home to its former glory.

*Eric and Rebecca Halvorson, Owners*
*Builtwright Construction Company*
*Andrew A Willett, Architect*
*French Broad Plumbing*
*Jon Fedock, Electrician*
*Logan Restoration, Windows*
*Air Craftsman, HVAC*

REHABILITATION
## Smith McDowell House, Roof Replacement

Years of planning went into the roof replacement project recently completed at the Smith-McDowell House. The copper used was manipulated by hand, giving the finished roof a more historically authentic look. Over the next few years, the copper will take on a beautiful patina for all to enjoy.

*Western North Carolina Historical Association, Owner*
*Huber and Associates, Contactor*
*Emily Kite, Architect*

REHABILITATION
## 85 N. Liberty Street

This 1890 home was designed with a three-story conical-roofed tower on its northwest corner, however, the tower's third story and roof had been lost over the years to many renovations that resulted in a ten unit rental property. Add to that some serious fire damage and this was no simple project, however, owners David Bedingfield and Karina Guillot put in the work and the results are stunning!

*David Bedingfield and Karina Guillot, Owners*
*Turnwright Construction*
*Gregory Koester Design*
*Cook Engineering*
*TP Howard Plumbing*
*John McClung Roofing*
*Scott Spencer Drywall*
*Quality Comfort Heating and Air*
*Accent Elevator*
*Majestic Flooring*
*Latinos Painting*
*Spirit Tile*
*Anna Krauss*
*Hagerling Painting and Wallpaper*
*Forest Millwork*
*Parks Decorative Hardware*
*Rhodes Glass*
*Classic Masonry*
*S&L Trim Carpentry*

REHABILITATION
## 90 Gertrude Place, Exterior Living Space

When Robert and Jennifer Beatty bought this home, the concrete and modern ceramic tile that made up the over-sized patio was not original and did not match the style of the home. The painstaking reconstruction of the outdoor area was guided by original Richard Sharp Smith plans for the home leading to a beautiful and more historically appropriate area for the family to enjoy.

*Robert and Jennifer Beatty, Owners*
*Adams and Adams Construction*

REHABILITATION
## 240 Pearson Drive

While the bones were good, owners Mark and Jennifer Kiiss took on an incredible amount of work to turn this former rooming house back into a single family home. They put in all new systems, a new roof and reconstructed original features like the porte cochere, always with an eye to keeping and highlighting as many of the original details as possible.

*Mark and Jennifer Kiiss, Owners*
*Hands of Sean Perry*
*Brent Campbell Architects*
*Maria Garuti, Interior Design*
*Cris Bifaro Woodworks*
*Union Woodworks*
*Square Peg*

RESTORATION
## Biltmore Stable, Glass Replacement

This project brought its own set of challenges including having glass replacement panels with unique texture made to match the originals and undertaking the project while guests were present at the Estate. The result was well worth the effort!

*The Biltmore Company*
*Huber and Associates*
*Meltdown Glass*
*Associated Scaffolding*

PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF ASHEVILLE AND BUNCOMBE CO. GRIFFIN AWARD

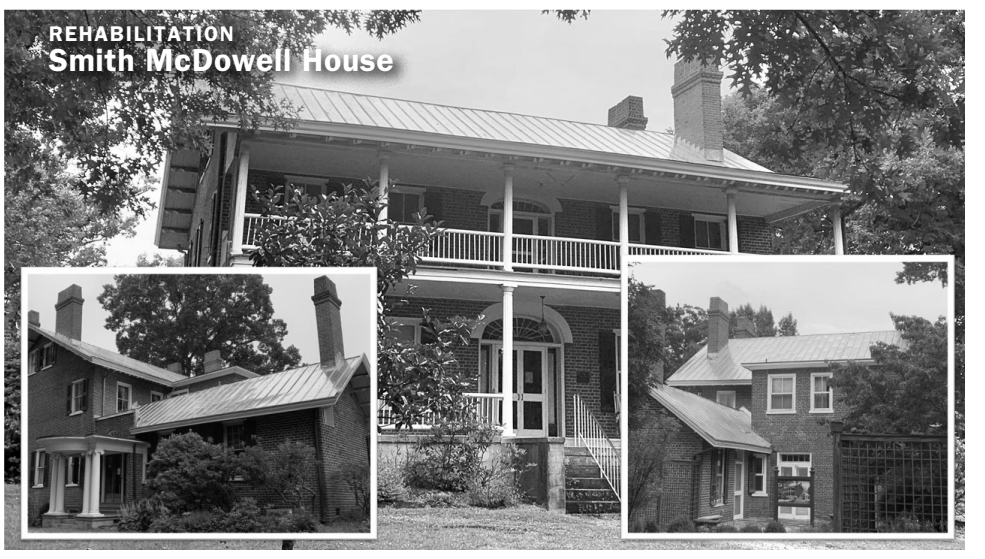
**Be sure to follow us on social media to see the virtual Griffin Award presentation that we will release this month.**

PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF ASHEVILLE AND BUNCOMBE CO.

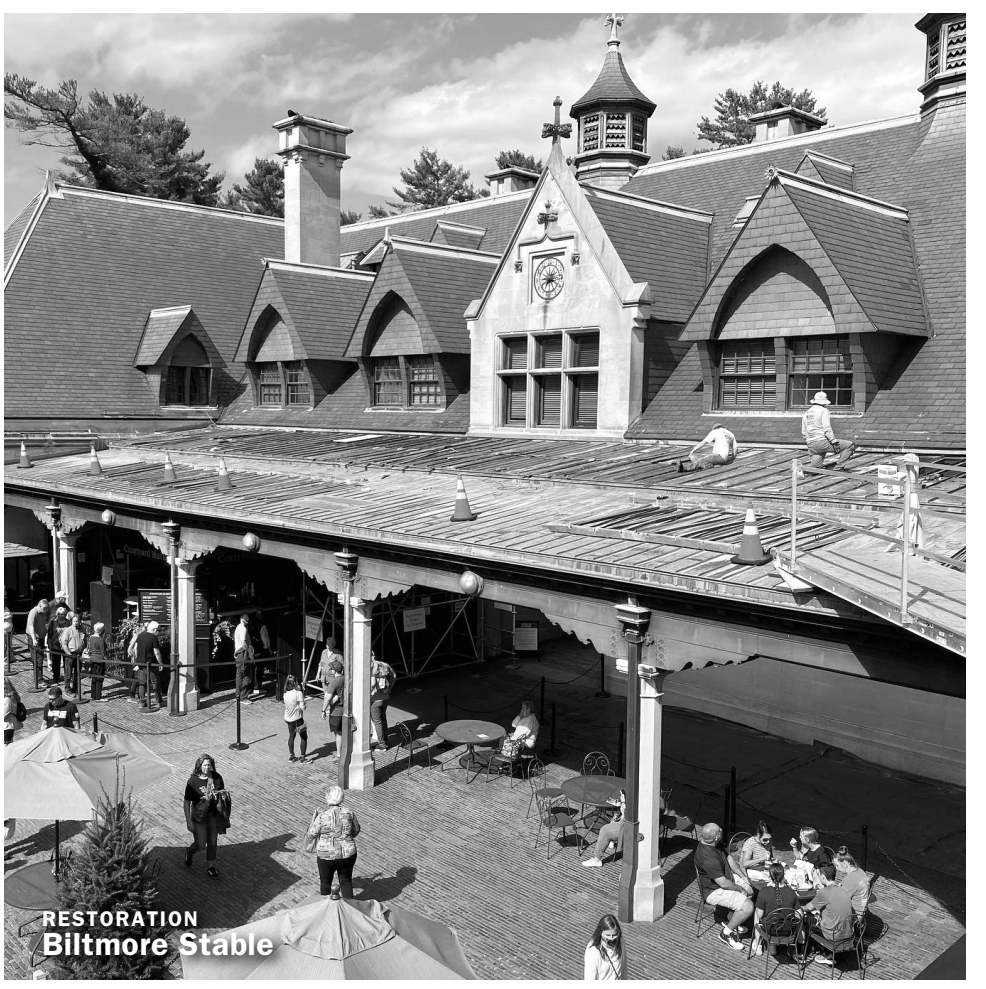
Thank you to our wonderful members, hard-working volunteers and supporters.
*Join us! psabc.org*

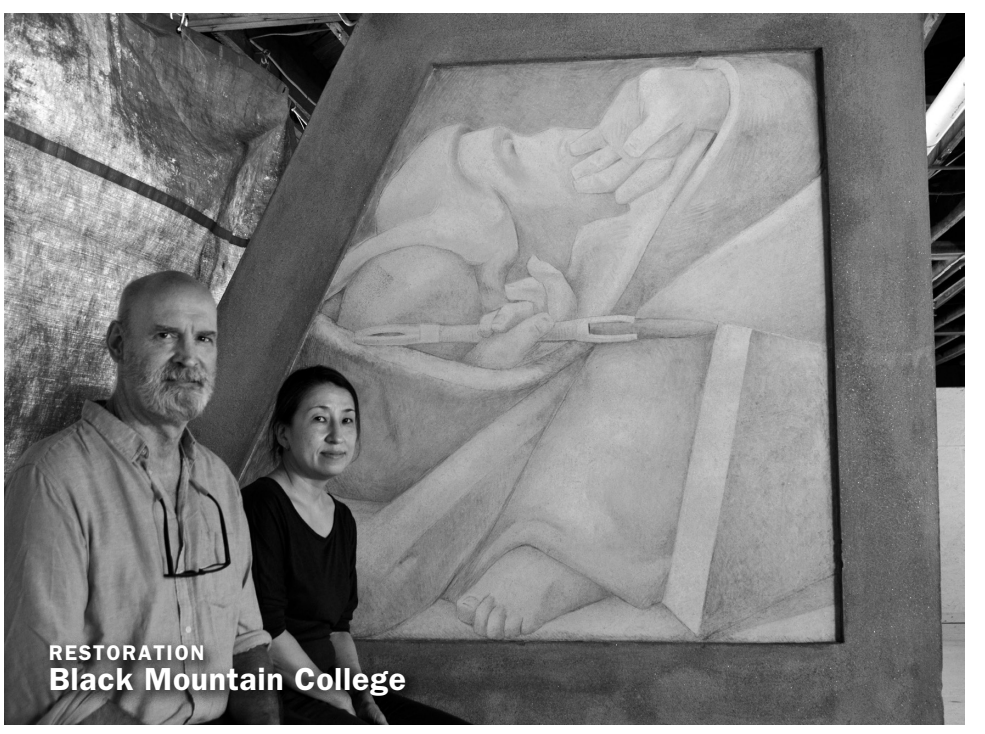
# *Congratulations*

REHABILITATION
**179 Montford Ave**


REHABILITATION
**Smith McDowell House**

REHABILITATION
**240 Pearson Drive**


RESTORATION
**Biltmore Stable**


RESTORATION
**Black Mountain College**

**RESTORATION**
## Black Mountain College, Fresco Conservation

Among the many original historic structures intact on the historic site of Black Mountain College's former campus is the Studies Building, which includes two significant frescos created by Jean Charlot (1898-1979) and BMC students in the summer of 1944. The murals are among Black Mountain College's most iconic artworks, and serve as integral components of the BMC Studies Building, which is itself an iconic example of International Style architecture. Taking care to avoid any heavy-handed changes that might obscure Charlot's original work and intent, conservators worked to reduce visibility of the losses, gouges, and scratches that distract from what remains of the artist's work.

*Camp Rockmont, Owners*
*Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center*
*Christiana Cunningham-Adams, Conservator*
*Craig Crawford, Conservator*
*Maho Yoshikawa, Conservator*
*Heather South, Western Regional Archives*
*Jennifer Cathey, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office*
*Marion Stedman Covington Foundation*

**EDUCATION**
## Buncombe County Name Game

Beginning in March 2020, Mary Standaert and her husband Joe, who have authored postcard history books on Montreat and the Swannanoa Valley, began an educational project called the "Buncombe County Name Game". Mary created 175 Buncombe County Name Game well-researched, historic, educational posts, most of which include an historic postcard from her extensive collection. She shares these history tidbits for free through social media and email.

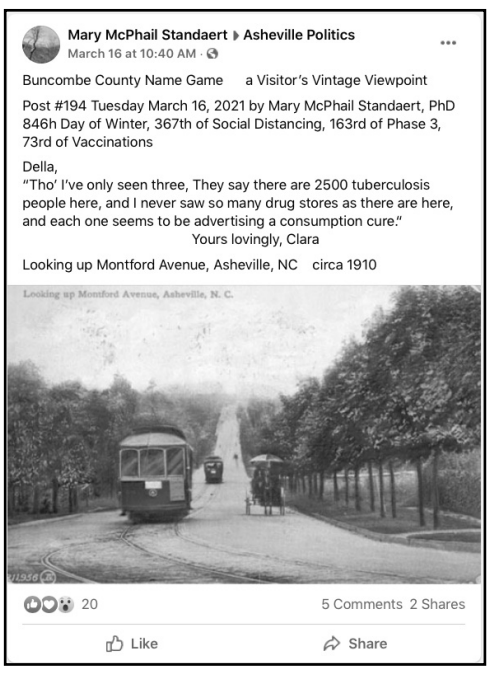
*Mary Standaert*

**EDUCATION**
## National Arts & Crafts Conference and Bruce Johnson

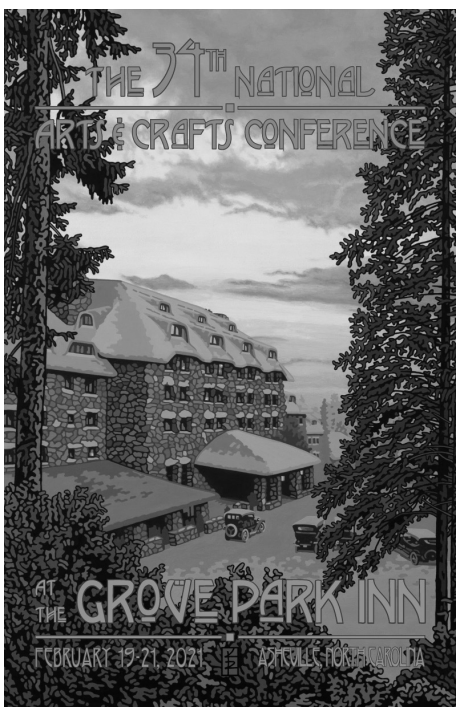
For 34 years, Bruce Johnson has been hosting the National Arts & Crafts Conference in Asheville. Every year the event welcomes thousands of guest to the Omni Grove Park Inn for everything from seminars to demonstrations to antique shows. Repeat guests are not just common, they are the norm with conference goers proudly wearing their badges advertising how many years they have attended the conference. In 2021, Bruce Johnson and Kate Nixon seamlessly transitioned to a virtual conference offering events every day throughout the month of February. And don't think they are taking a break, planning has already begun for the 35th annual National Arts & Crafts Conference!

*Bruce Johnson*
*Kate Nixon*

**EDUCATION**
## Buncombe County Name Game


Mary McPhail Standaert ▸ Asheville Politics
March 16 at 10:40 AM ·
Buncombe County Name Game a Visitor's Vintage Viewpoint
Post #194 Tuesday March 16, 2021 by Mary McPhail Standaert, PhD
846h Day of Winter, 367th of Social Distancing, 163rd of Phase 3, 73rd of Vaccinations
Della,
"Tho' I've only seen three, They say there are 2500 tuberculosis people here, and I never saw so many drug stores as there are here, and each one seems to be advertising a consumption cure."
Yours lovingly, Clara
Looking up Montford Avenue, Asheville, NC circa 1910
Looking up Montford Avenue, Asheville, N. C.
20
5 Comments 2 Shares
Like
Share

**EDUCATION**
## National Arts & Crafts Conference–Bruce Johnson

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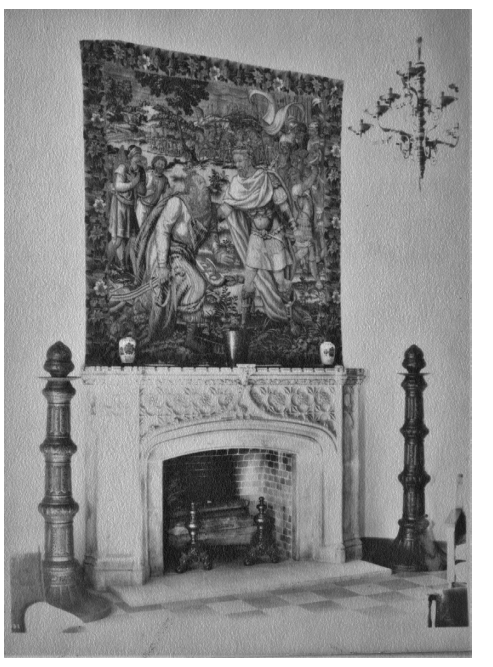


**Left:** Fred Loring Seely's Overlook residence on Sunset Mountain, construction began in 1913 and the Seely family moved into the completed castle in 1916,

**Above:** The vintage mantle surround in the "new" library at Overlook was reportedly salvaged from an English manor house purportedly to have once been owned by Queen Victoria.

**See more photos and a full list of article references at psabc.org**

# "Overlook"-Fred Seely's Stone Castle:
## Forde Abbey Transposed on Overlook Mountain

**DALE WAYNE SLUSSER**

On May 24, 1914, the *Charlotte Observer* reported the following news from Asheville: "Work on the stone castle which Fred L. Seely is building on the brow of Overlook Mountain has been resumed and a force of 30 workmen is now engaged in erecting the walls of what is expected to be one of the finest private homes in the South. The building follows closely the design of Forde Abbey, England, a stone castle of the year 1850 and will present the appearance of the old feudal castles of the Fourteenth Century." This grand residence, which Seely simply named "Overlook", is also generally known as "Seely's Castle".

Much has already been written about Seely's Castle, both fact and fiction (suspected haunting), however, I would like to examine the residence from an architectural viewpoint, looking at its style, possible precedents, and its comparison to Forde Abbey, which inspired its creation. But first, let us look briefly at Fred Seely and what led up to the building of his mountaintop castle.

Fred Loring Seely (left) was born in 1871 in Fort Monmouth, N.J., the son of Uriah and Nancy Hopping Seely. At the age of thirteen, Fred was hired by a pharmaceutical firm in New York as an office boy. He began the study of pharmacy, both on the job and through the New College of Pharmacy. Later he joined Parke-Davis and Company of Detroit as one of eight employees making up the first formal pharmaceutical firm in the country.

When he was 24 years of age, he was promoted to be the Head of the tablet manufacturing division of Parke-Davis. He developed a machine to make pills or tablets and another to count and package them.

In 1897, Edwin W. Grove, founder of the Paris Medicine Company of St. Louis and a customer of Parke-Davis, visited Parke-Davis seeking information which he hoped would help perfect his Laxative Bromo Quinine tablets. He was referred to Fred Seely. Seely not only had some excellent suggestions for Grove, but he also "wined and dined" Grove for the next couple of days. Grove was so impressed with Seely's suggestions, that shortly thereafter, Grove hired Seely to manage a small experimental manufacturing laboratory that he was opening in Asheville. Grove had come to Asheville in hopes that it would improve his health.

The July 14, 1898 edition of the *Asheville Citizen-Times* published the following notice: "E. W. Grove, president of the Paris Medicine Company has leased the old cigarette factory at the corner of South Main and Atkins streets, the building to be used as a location for the manufacture of Bromo-Quinine. F. L. Seely, an expert chemist, will have charge of the Asheville branch of the company's business. Machinery has been ordered and operations will begin, it is thought, in about six weeks." Shortly after taking over Grove's Asheville factory, Seely designed, developed and patented a device (machine) for "measuring, delivering, and wrapping powders". Seely was not only a chemist, but an engineer and an adroit businessman.

In 1898 Seely married Evelyn Grove, E. W. Grove's daughter. The couple remained living in St. Louis, while Fred commuted to Asheville on occasion. By 1900, the Asheville factory closed and Seely, who was then the Secretary-Treasurer of the Paris Medicine Company, was transferred back to the St. Louis headquarters. Seely's talents and industriousness made him both successful and rich. In fact, in the 1900 US Census, he reported his occupation as "Financier".

In 1901, Mr. & Mrs. Seely embarked on a worldwide trip. First to Java and India to scout out and investigate possible quinine sources, then on to the Holy Land and home via stops in Europe. Perhaps it was then that Seely visited Forde Abbey, although he was an inveterate traveler during those early years, so it could have been on a subsequent trip.

Then in 1902, surprisingly (to the pharmaceutical world), at 30 years of age, Fred Loring Seely decided to retire to pursue the study of Law at Yale University. His decision was widely publicized in the newspapers and trade journals. Accompanied by a photo, the September 18, 1902 issue of *The Pharmaceutical Era* magazine announced that "Fred L. Seely Deserts Business For Law Books". Despite his highly publicized plans, the fact of the matter is that, in the end, although Fred Seely did retire from the pharmaceutical business in 1902, he apparently never attended Yale, nor studied law, although he did spend a year living in Princeton taking a few general education courses.

In 1905, Seely's father-in-law, E. W. Grove, persuaded Seely to move to Atlanta, where in partnership with John Temple Graves, he founded an afternoon newspaper, named *The Georgian*. In 1907, John Temple Graves, moved to New York, leaving Seely totally in charge of the flourishing newspaper. At the time, it was reported by a perceptive and prophetic reporter that because Seely "has succeeded in everything he has ever undertaken" that he would soon be a leading publisher, "in the front rank of southern publishers."

As a publisher, Seely became a noted editorialist, and *The Georgian* was so successful that in 1912, when Seely decided to sell his newspaper, he attracted the eye of the top notch titan of publishing, William Randolph Hearst. In February of 1912, Hearst purchased *The Atlanta Georgian* for $31,300.

In 1912, immediately after the sale of his newspaper, Seely moved his family to Asheville to help his father-in-law, E. W. Grove, who had previously relocated to Asheville, where he had begun what would become his massive and numerous real estate development projects. Grove intended that his "Grove Park" development at the north end of Charlotte Street in northeast Asheville would attract high-end clients, and as an incentive to attract wealthy clients, Grove decided to build a first-class hotel and country-club as its centerpiece. Apparently, Grove had persuaded Seely to sell the newspaper so that Seely could take over the construction and development of Grove's proposed "Grove Park Inn". The story of the building of the Grove Park Inn has been told by others, but suffice it to say that its creation, construction, management, and development and ultimate success can be almost entirely attributed to Fred Seely.

As the story goes, although Grove and Seely had solicited numerous proposals and renderings from leading architects of the day for the design of the new Grove Park Inn, none of them met with Grove's approval. In the end, it was Seely's amateur design proposal that caught the attention of his father-in-law. Seely's design satisfied Grove's original intent to build a grand rustic-style hotel resembling Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone National Park. To provide the professional design and engineering for the new "fireproof" hotel, Seely chose architectural engineer, Groce W. McKibbin of the Southern Ferro-Concrete Company of Atlanta. The construction of the massive Inn was completed in a little over one year and was opened on July 1, 1913, under the adroit management of Fred L. Seely.

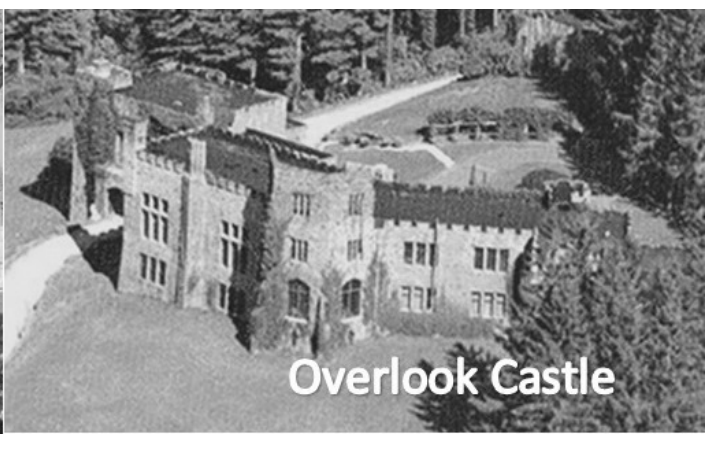
As the construction was nearing completion on the Grove Park Inn, it was announced in the January 17, 1913 edition of the *Asheville Citizen-Times* that: "Ground has been broken at Overlook park, preparatory to the laying of the foundation for the residence of Fred L. Seely, work upon which will be started immediately." Overlook Park was the former recreation park on the top of Sunset Mountain, overlooking Chunn's Cove, which had been established in 1900 by R. S. Howland. E. W. Grove purchased the park in the Spring of 1910, and within a year he had closed the park to the public. In the summer of 1911, Grove remodeled the former park pavilion into a temporary residence for Fred Seely and his family. The Seelys occupied their bungalow for the ensuing years during construction of their new residence. Although the site preparation and foundations were started in January of 1913, it was not until the Spring of 1914 that the actual building permit was issued, and construction begun in earnest. And although the construction timeline in 1913 was predicted as one year, the Seelys were not able to occupy their new stone castle until the end of 1916.

Modern-day (twentieth and twenty-first century) castle-building has its earliest roots in the Gothic Revival Movement started in England in the mid-eighteenth century when Horace Walpole built his mock-Gothic house, Strawberry Hill, in Twickenham, England, borrowing its design and detailing from medieval Gothic architecture. Although Classicism reigned in eighteenth-century England (and it's colonies-like us), Gothic-revival architecture, called "Gothick", began being popularized for domestic architecture by builder's and architects through architectural pattern books such as Batty Langley's (also from Twickenham) Ancient Architecture, Restored, and Improved, published in 1742 and reissued in 1747 as Gothic Architecture, Improved by Rules and Proportions. However, modern-day castle-building has its most direct roots in the Victorian Romantic Revival movement. "It is really only after 1840 that the Gothic Revival began to gather steam" writes author David Ross. In England, men like A. W. Pugin and John Ruskin promoted Gothic-revival architecture through their writings, such as Ruskin's publications, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851).

> The design of Overlook is a result of using a design influence like Forde Abbey in combination with a specific site, timeframe, type of construction, modern building technologies, use of local building materials

In America, the primary promoter of Gothic-revival architecture for domestic architecture was architect, Alexander Jackson Davis. In an interesting twist, the designs of A. J. Davis, were first promoted (and thus proliferated) through the publications of a landscape architect named, A. J. Downing. Andrew Jackson Downing's publications: *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) which featured house designs mostly by architect Alexander Jackson Davis, would greatly impact the design of residences across the country. Using the revolutionary ideas of the Picturesque Aesthetic, and the romantic English cottage, Downing's and Davis' designs were adapted for American houses, and included the integration of landscaping, interior decoration, furniture and even heating and ventilation issues. However, Alexander Jackson Davis, on his own, promoted the Gothic Revival through his individual commissions, such as the notable, stone gothic mansion "Lyndhurst" first designed by Davis for William Paulding in 1838, and expanded with further Davis designs for its second owner, George Merritt in 1864.

Seely's Castle was not the first "castle" built in Asheville. In 1889, shortly after returning from living in New Zealand for twenty years, John Evans Brown purchased five acres on top of Beaucatcher Mountain, just south of where Seely's castle would later be built. On his newly purchased site, Brown erected Zealandia, a castellated brick Gothic Revival castle,



of which it was reported that, "Mőro castle of Havana, being somewhat suggestive of the plan." Zealandia, which survives, was greatly enlarged by Phillip S. Henry, who had purchased the castle in 1904. It was probably around 1907-08, when during its expansion, that the original brick walls were covered with pebble-dash stucco.

We can also attribute Seely's Medieval Gothic design to the work of Victorian-Edwardian English Arts & Crafts architects such as Norman Shaw, Phillip Webb, Edwin Lutyens, C. F. A. Voysey, and Baillie Scott. In reaction to the excesses of the industrial-revolution with its mass-produced goods, early proponents of the Arts & Crafts movement sought to bring back hand-craftmanship and creative design to the field of art, architecture, and the decorative arts. For their inspiration they hearkened back to the work of the medieval guild craftsmen and Gothic architecture. "The early writings of the Arts and Crafts movement exude praise for the Gothic in the face of the then-current affection for the classical," writes architectural historian/author Beth Dunlop. The medieval influences were manifested in the work of Lutyens, Voysey and Scott by the use of asymmetry, towered and windowed bays, leaded glass windows, stonework and masonry exteriors, baronial hall-styled rooms, Tudor-detailing, and beamed ceilings. These influences also certainly informed the design of Overlook Castle.

However, we know from the contemporary newspaper reports, published when it was being built, that the primary design influences for Seely's stone castle, was from Forde Abbey, an actual medieval building. Forde Abbey, a privately owned former Cistercian monastery in Dorset, England, was founded in the twelfth century and flourished as a monastery for four hundred years. The monastery was dissolved in 1539, and Forde Abbey was turned over to the Crown, as rental income. For the next hundred years the property was owned by a succession of absentee landlords, who farmed the lands, until 1649 when it was purchased by Edmund Prideaux a Member of Parliament. Prideaux was responsible for transforming Forde Abbey from a monastery into a private home.

Seely's Castle, Overlook, has been purported to be a copy or replica of Forde Abbey, however, it is only "somewhat suggestive" of Forde Abbey. I will say though, that Overlook is much more "suggestive" of Forde Abbey than Zealandia is of Mőro castle, and with a comparison and study of its details, it becomes obvious to the perceptive observer, that Overlook was designed using Forde Abbey for its primary design influences. Take Forde Abbey and transpose it to the twentieth century, and set it on a mountaintop, instead of in a meadow by the river, add modern amenities and the result is Seely's Castle. The design of Overlook is a result of using a design influence like Forde Abbey in combination with a specific site, timeframe, type of construction, modern building technologies, use of local building materials, and the client's (Seely's) design program (number, types, and uses of proposed spaces).

The most obvious resemblance of Overlook Castle to Forde Abbey is the blockish massing of the castle and its stone castellated walls. This rectilinear shape of Overlook Castle, at first looks like it owes its design to the tenets of Art Deco design, but in fact its roots are in the Medieval design of Forde Abbey. Whereas the stone exterior walls of Forde Abbey are of smooth ashlar stone, the walls of Overlook are a unique combination of elongated (almost brick-shaped) square coursed rubble interspersed with standing rubble stones. This is another example of transposition, as dressed ashlar stone would have been more expensive to use for Overlook and would not have fit into the rustic-mountain esthetic which was becoming popular in early twentieth-century Western North Carolina.

Overlook and Forde Abbey share a similar floor plan arrangement. Both plans give the appearance of and in fact are a result of the attrition of numerous additions over the years. Like Forde Abbey, the principal rooms of Overlook are strung out on an east-west axis and are located in the center and west side of the first floor, with all the principal rooms having their main view-windows on the south elevation. However, their main views are remarkably different, as the Abbey sits on the valley floor next to the River Axe, with its southerly view looking out over a formal garden, whereas Overlook, being sited on top of Sunset Mountain, has its view down to the Chunn's Cove valley below. Overlook's floor plan is angled to maximize the view, whereas Forde Abbey's floor plan is all right angles.

Overlook Castle's most obvious connection to Forde Abbey is the design of its medieval- Great Hall-styled living room. In its baronial scale, style, and details, one can see that Overlook's living room was inspired by Abbot's Hall at Forde Abbey. Abbots Hall was built by sixteenth century Cistercian Abbot, Thomas Chard, whose "extravagant and beautiful additions to the monastery were begun in 1522". As the centerpiece of his new lavish "Abbot's Lodgings", Chard's Great Hall, which functioned as his living room, was "some 80 feet long, 28 feet wide, and 28 feet high extending over six bays, one of the largest in southern England." Abbot's Hall was entered through a sumptuous entrance tower (which Chard also built) at its southeast corner. As originally built, several bays of south-facing triple gothic windows, extended west from the tower. The western three bays were removed or obscured during Edmund Prideau's seventeenth-century remodeling.

The main entrance to Overlook, and access to its Great Hall-living room is also through a tower, albeit its tower has striking differences from Abbot Chard's tower at Forde Abbey. The first obvious difference is that Overlook's tower is wedge shaped on the interior, but on the exterior, it appears to have been intended to be octagonal, however, since the third story of the tower was never completed, its appearance is that of an angled bay. Although the tower at Overlook is prominent on its south elevation, like the tower at Forde Abbey, its entrance is actually on its north side at the narrow end of its wedged shape. This difference was no doubt necessitated by its steep mountain site where the grade slopes away from north to south, making an at or near grade entrance most convenient on its north elevation. This also may have been a component of its design program, as this allows for its south-facing expanse to function as a light-filled reception hall with majestic mountaintop views.

The interior design of the baronial-scaled Great Hall living room at Overlook has perhaps the most recognizable connection to Forde Abbey, although there are also obvious differences. The Great Hall, though not as long in length, is in scale with Abbot's Hall, measuring 30 feet wide by 57 feet long with a 32 feet high ceiling. At Overlook, un-plastered stone shows above high wood-paneled walls. The massive rustic wood ceiling beams are an interpretation of the painted wood ceiling beams in Abbot's Hall. Also, both Halls have a massive arched stone chimney on their north wall in juxtaposition to large view windows on the south wall. The sloped chimney breast at Overlook pays homage to the sloped corbeled stone walls behind Abbot's Hall's fireplace. A unique feature specific to the Great Hall at Overlook is the curved stair on the north wall that sweeps down to the ground floor dining room in a projecting stone towered bay.

The original library at Overlook was accessed through the west-end of the north wall of the Great Hall. This room now functions as a music room and thoroughfare from the Great Hall to the "new" library, added in 1924. Although certainly smaller in scale, Overlook's original library may well have been inspired by the library at Forde Abbey. The library at Forde Abbey was originally The Upper Refectory, a dining room allotted to meat-eating monks who were required to dine separately from their vegetarian colleagues (the vegetarian monks ate in the Lower Refectory). In the seventh-century, owner Edmund Prideaux added a minstrel gallery to room. Herbert Evans, who inherited Forde Abbey from his father Bertram Evans, transformed the former refectory/hayloft into a library in the mid-nineteenth century. The cozy library at Overlook, with its narrow high windows, and walls lined with high glass doored bookcases interspersed with wood-paneled wainscot, pays homage to the dark wood high bookcases and carved-wood paneled wainscoting in the library at Forde Abbey.

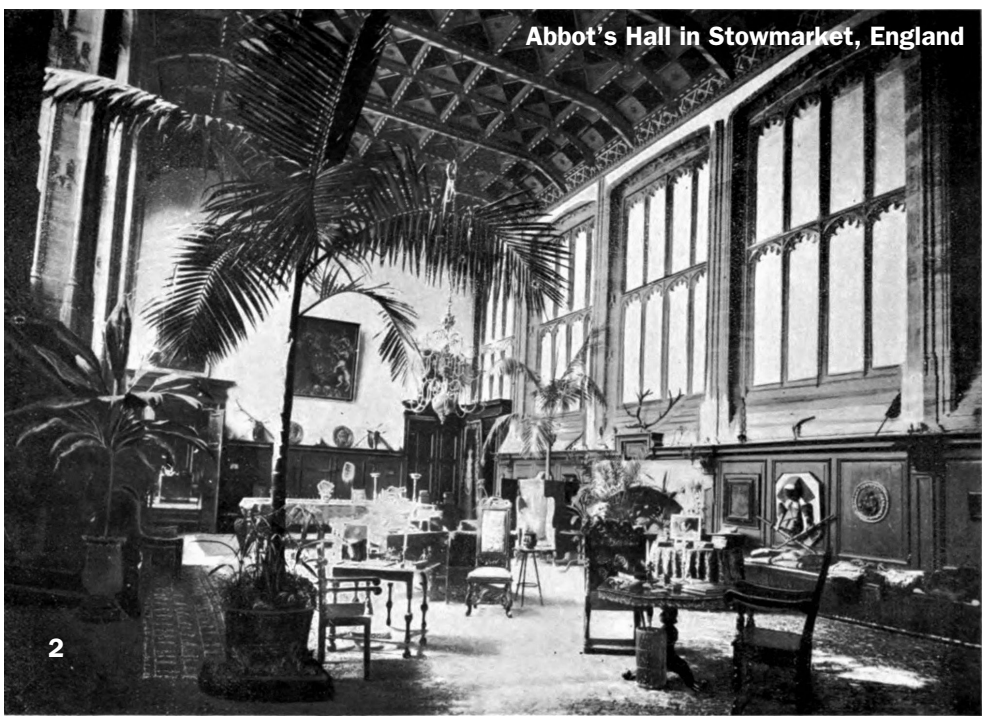
The "new" library at Overlook, added in 1924, which measured 40 feet wide by 50 feet long, is almost twice as large as the original library. Solid double-height mahogany bookshelves cover the entire north wall, with a massive six-glass-paneled folding doors with an arched glass transom above, on its opposing southern wall. The glass folding doors, which have brass fixtures, operate on ball rollers that enable them to fold back like a screen, opening to a small balcony. The leaded glass doors, made by Hope Casement Company of England, were quite innovative for their time, and are much like the modern folding glass doors we have today.

The design of the new library probably took most of its design influences from the already existing part of Overlook, however, one detail that may have been influenced by, or is at least characteristic of Forde Abbey is the ornamental plaster-work ceiling. Although heavier and highly more ornamental than those at Overlook, the ceilings in the formal gathering rooms (Drawing Room, Dining Room, West Dining Room & Main Stair) at Forde Abbey all feature molded plasterwork ceilings. The ceiling plasterwork in the new library at Overbook is in a geometric pattern which features rows of alternating large molded barbed-quatrefoils connected in each direction with molded square-crosses. In the recesses formed by the crosses are square foliage ornaments. The recesses of the quatrefoils each contain a family crest either of the Seely, More, or Leslie families. The stair hall which connects the new library to the old library also features a coved ornamental plaster-work ceiling, although the geometric pattern is simple and unadorned.

Another architectural feature of the new library at Overbrook is the carved stone Tudor mantle-surround on the angled fireplace in the southwest corner of the room. The vintage mantle-surround was reportedly salvaged from an English manor house purportedly to have once been owned by Queen Victoria. Although it does not directly match any mantle-surround at Forde Abbey, it is certainly in the same Gothic-Tudor style, and its castellated top is certainly consistent with the Gothic-Castle design theme of Overlook Castle.

In 1949, seven years after the death of Fred Seely, Evelyn Seely sold Overlook to Asheville-Biltmore College, with the stipulation that the residence building be named "Seely Hall". The college occupied the property until 1961 when they then moved to their new campus across town (now the campus of UNCA). Two years later, a developer named William W. Bond, Jr. purchased the property and erected a high-rise apartment building on a portion of the land. In 1965, the developer sold the remaining land, including Overlook Castle, to Jerry Sternberg, who subsequently took on the momentous task of restoring the house, which had fallen into ruin since the college had vacated the building. Sternberg restored the Castle back to a family residence. In 1976, the Sternbergs offered the property for sale, but when no qualified buyer could be found, they donated the property to a charitable organization for tax purposes. This organization in turn sold the property to Nicholas & Patricia Cassizzi in 1978 who used the property for a new Christian ministry which they called Overlook Christian Ministries. In 1983, Overlook Christian Ministries sold the property to its sixth owner, Loren V. Wells, the founder of the retail clothing chain, Bon Worth. The Wells family still owns the Castle.

Overlook's historical significance was affirmed in 1981 when the property was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Then in 1984, the City of Asheville officially designated Overlook as a Local Historic Landmark. As a Local Historic Landmark, any alterations to the property are subject to design review by the Historic Resources Commission and the owners must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness prior to commencement of work. These historic designations help to ensure that Overlook, Fred Seely's interpretation of Forde Abbey transposed on Sunset Mountain, remains as a visible and identifiable part of Asheville's architectural and social history.



**Photos 1&2:** The baronial-scaled Great Hall living room at Overlook has much in common with Abbot's Hall (the second photo from top). Overlook's unplastered stone shows above high wood paneled walls. The massive rustic wood ceiling beams are an interpretation of the painted wood ceiling beams in Abbot's Hall. The sloped chimney breast at Overlook pays homage to the sloped corbeled stone walls behind Abbot's Hall's fireplace.

**Photo 3:** The leaded-glass folding doors made by Hope Casement Company of England, operated on ball rollers that enable them to fold back like a screen opening to a small balcony.

**Photo 4:** The stair hall which connects the new library with the old library featured a coved ornamental plaster-work ceiling with simple and unadorned geometric patterns.

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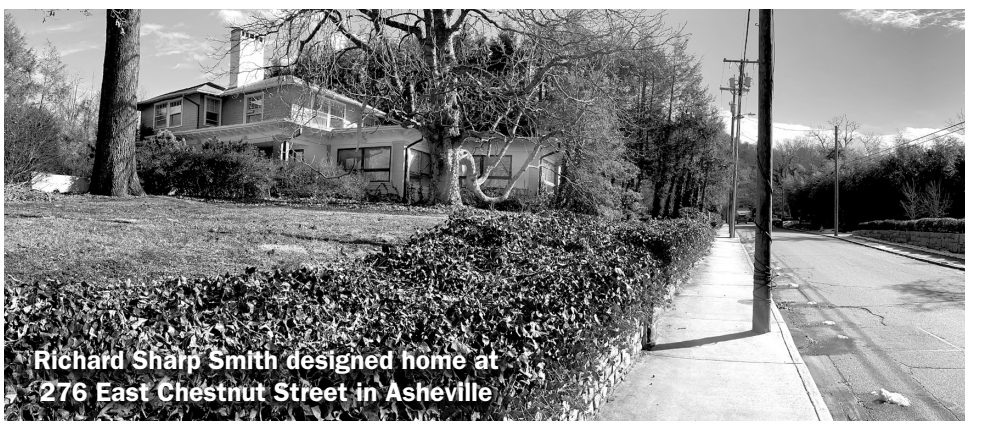
# Local Author's Perspective on Threatened Home in North Asheville



Richard Sharp Smith designed home at 276 East Chestnut Street in Asheville

**WAYNE CALDWELL**

Richard Sharp Smith, a Yorkshireman, came to Asheville at the behest of Richard Morris Hunt, the architect of George Vanderbilt's "little project." Smith, after serving as supervising architect at Biltmore, and finishing the design of Biltmore Village after Hunt's death, stayed in Asheville. By his death in 1924 he had designed hundreds of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings in the area, including the redbrick block on the eastern side of Broadway between College Street and Walnut Street, the Masonic Temple on Broadway, St. Mary's Episcopal Church on Charlotte Street, the William Jennings Bryan house on Edwin Place, and the YMI Building on South Market Street.

We are fortunate to have a more or less complete set of his architectural drawings, which I have spent some pleasant hours with recently. The breadth of his imagination is evident, and the quantity of projects is breath-taking. Many were not built—not every architect lands every project he or she pitches—and many have, unfortunately, gone the way of the bulldozer and wrecking ball. But many are still extant, and, at the remove of a century or so, still serve their city and its neighborhoods with grace and style.

One such building is 276 East Chestnut Street, originally the home of Wooster Baird McEwan, who came to Asheville from Connecticut in the 1890s to run a high-dollar lumber company. He commissioned Smith to design a home, which was finished around 1899. The building quickly became a social hub for the well-to-do. A June, 1911 article in the Asheville Gazette-News, for example, tells of a pre-wedding party given in honor of Miss Kate Nichols, a young relative of Mrs. McEwen, soon to marry Wallace Davis, an up-and-coming young banker. Everyone who was anyone was there, as they say. You might find the Wallace Davis name familiar—he was president of Central Bank and Trust when it crashed in 1930, leading to Mayor Gallatin Roberts's suicide and financial ruin for the city and its citizens. In 1914 Davis was Central Bank's "Cashier" and a Director; McEwen was its Vice-President.

It would be a shame to lose this part of Asheville's social and economic history. Not to mention that this house is a healthy part of a vitally functioning neighborhood, one that depends on older buildings, older trees, and slower speeds than might be needed on, say, Hendersonville Road.

I was fortunate to have worked in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood for a decade. My sister- in-law, Kathryn Long, and I worked out of a Richard Sharp Smith house, the Annie West Cottage at the corner of East Chestnut and Central Avenue. Finished in 1905, its first use was as a boarding house, then it became the home of the Rogers family, plumbing moguls. After they sold it, it became home to a CPA firm, real estate folks, various human service organizations, and probably a stray animal or two. Ambiance Interiors moved there in 2009 for a ten-year stint. The building is now the home of the Lancaster Law Firm. After Ambiance had been on Broadway for years, working in Chestnut Hill was like a respite—from traffic, noise, parking problems, all the clash and clatter of downtown life. The neighborhood actually had birds other than pigeons. One could take a walk on a sunny day down, say, Washington Avenue to Hillside Street, then up to Liberty Street and back, watching flowers and bees and trees and people, not to mention seeing the lovely buildings designed by Smith and others, still functioning after all these years. A neighborhood with few intrusions, Chestnut Hill is a fine—and quiet—place to live and work.

Oh, I know there are folks who denigrate Smith's work. (I'll not mention that he designed the Vance Monument.) Tony Lord was reported as having said if he were in an old Asheville building and put a marble on its floor, if it rolled to one corner of the room it was a Richard Sharp Smith building. It was sure that way in the Annie West Cottage! But that simply accented the charm of older construction and, by the way, made cleanup easier if a drink were spilled. The light inside, the grass and flowers outside, and the generous porch made life there so much more tolerable than in downtown. It would be a shame to lose yet another example of Smith's work.

One of Smith's great talents was to blend a new structure into an existing neighborhood without disruption, yet keeping a sense of unique style. That does not seem to me to be a talent the Charlotte Street Properties people have in their plans. The proposed project is wrong for Asheville on several levels, but I choose to emphasize its break with Asheville's history, the mood of Chestnut Hill—and the spirit of Richard Sharp Smith.

*Wayne Caldwell was born in Asheville, NC and is the author of "Cataloochee" and "Requiem by Fire", which Wayne won the 2010 Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award from the Western North Carolina Historical Association.*

# Want To Find Out More About Western North Carolina's Rich History? Start Here.

**The Historic Resources Commission** (HRC) of Asheville & Buncombe County was created in 1979 through a local ordinance adopted by both the City of Asheville & Buncombe County pursuant to the North Carolina General Statutes. The HRC has also been certified by the State Historic Preservation Office with the concurrence of the National Park Service to carry out the purpose of the National Historic Preservation Act at the local government level.

The mission of the **Western North Carolina Historical Association** is the preservation and promotion of the history of Western North Carolina through care, investigation, interpretation and presentation of the Smith-McDowell House Museum and its relationship to the region; the education of the public through lectures, exhibitions, publications, and related events and the facilation of cooperations among regional historical organizations.

**The Swannanoa Valley Museum** has served the Western North Carolina community since 1989 as Buncombe County's primary museum of general local history. The history of the region is interpreted in a unique collection of photos and artifacts from the Swannanoa Valley that relate in microcosm the history of the settlement not only of the Swannanoa Valley, but also of Buncombe County and Western North Carolina.

**Buncombe County Special Collections at Pack Memorial Library** is a fully cataloged collection of published materials reflecting history, literature and life in Western North Carolina. Within the collection there is a particular emphasis on material relating to Asheville and Buncombe County.

**Special Collections and University Archives** is located on the second floor of D.H. Ramsey Library, at the center of the University of North Carolina Asheville campus. We welcome all users of our facilities including students, faculty, staff and community users. Our strength is in our local and regional material related to urban Appalachia. We have extensive photograph and manuscript collections that provide may points of entry into the history of Asheville, Buncombe County, western North Carolina and the Southern Appalachian region. We also have extensive collections related to urban planning, labor relations, WWI, Appalachian culture, and African Americans in western North Carolina.

Considered by many to be one of the giants of 20th Century American Literature, **Thomas Wolfe immortalized his childhood home** in his epic autobiographical novel, Look Homeward, Angel. Wolfe's colorful portrayal of his family, his hometown of Asheville, North Carolina, and the Old Kentucky Home boarding house earned the historic Victorian home a place as one of American Literature's most famous landmarks

**Zebulon B. Vance Birthplace.** Explore daily life on an early 1800s plantation in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Step inside a 1790s slave dwelling and hear the stories of the women and men who were enslaved by the Vances. Take a tour through the reconstructed birthplace of Zebulon B. Vance to discover how the environment and society of Western North Carolina shaped his political career.

Founded in 1939, **Preservation North Carolina** is North Carolina's only private nonprofit statewide historic preservation organization. Its mission is to protect and promote buildings, landscapes and sites important to the diverse heritage of North Carolina.

**NC Architects and Builders**: This biographical dictionary highlights architects and builders who have produced North Carolina's architecture for more than 300 years. A brief biography plus a building list traces each person's work in the state. This is a growing website, with many more entries still to be added.

# Books We Love

*Cabins & Castles: The History & Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina*
by Talmage Powell & John Ager

*The French Broad*
by Wilma Dykeman

*Cataloochee: A Novel*
by Wayne Caldwell

*The Road*
by John Ehle

*The Land Breakers*
by John Ehle

*The Last Castle: The Epic Story of Love, Loss, and American Royalty in the Nation's Largest Home*
by Denise Kiernan

Have a suggestion? Let us know!

# Word Scramble

H X M L N A T I O N A L R E G I S T E R S S W A S
V W X Z D P Z O K M E N A J M Z M L E O C O Y J P
X A D L L S V H E W O R L B P J O T O S A P J F A
P F C V O Q F X I F T J F H H Q R D H Q M U I I T
B Q O G Z R X M J Z P F G Q Z H F W P V U F I A V
M C M T O U M N J L Z O D P K M G S C F R W B X P
A E M E T U P H I Q I Z O W T H V I K H R C O A P
Y Z U U H K D D A Q P B L S I N M H D Y A T P E R
K H N N U H C Q D R U A D H F Q T R O G E E Y L E
Q Q I Q B B O V D H Y O H E W K Z P M N R F H J S
G M T Y T H A J V U H G O R P C I T O S H J J X E
B R Y V K S O T L Q I Y M W E B J P X G O H N O R
Y G A H E H O O A B S Q E L M Y R L W M W W E Q V
J U B A O A F S R I T V S R C H H V C M V Z I G A
C V B S F B T G L C O V W E L N P P R Q Z T G I T
X H G T E N H L C Y R F F C I D L X M V Z Y H G I
L I A T E L Y P Y M Y G J H F O P A O H I C B F O
T B A R X P A Y B F E A B A Y N L A P V E H O X N
J O P Y M X W E T Y R G Y S J E W E K D H I R K S
Z R X F K E N C J E Q F C M M V F N M B B R H P G
S F U C S I T O P L X A W J R S S M I T H R O K L
V F A B F M M E K Y E P I J B J P H M J Y V O E A
N O R U S P H H M U T Z E H E H V E R E R B D Q Y
V J U D Z I H J Q X F B Z C W J M J A P M A B J F
K D G H C H A R L O T T E S T R E E T S X B B U H

National Register
community
charm
Charlotte Street
old homes
preservation
neighborhood
history
R S Smith

"Sure, it will be an eyesore, but after we build a lot of them, it'll fit right in!"

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